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ABSTRACT

Conscious that the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples is a national priority, Australia's ministers of education, at a March 2000 meeting, committed themselves to a model of more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools. The model is based on findings from recent work to improve educational outcomes and integrates the successful outcomes of Indigenous programs into mainstream schooling practice. Three focus areas--community, school, and classroom--each have a number of elements to address. School communities need to understand the importance of adopting new approaches to Indigenous education; develop cross-portfolio mechanisms to address the relationship between low educational outcomes and poverty, poor health, deficient housing, and limited access to government services; and actively involve Indigenous parents in decision making. In schools, the integration of the new model will rely heavily on school leadership; an environment that is flexible, stimulating, and supportive; professional development that assists educators in integrating the new model; and implementation that is congruent with the prevailing curriculum and standards framework. Continuous monitoring and recording of Indigenous student progress will determine the success and future direction of the model. At the classroom level, the success of the new model will depend on teachers who understand Indigenous students, recognize differences in learning styles, have high expectations, and are receptive to innovation. A range of intervention strategies, such as one-on-one and small-group teaching, mentors, and parent/community support, must be considered for Indigenous students most at risk. (TD)

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ED 449 931

A MODEL OF MORE CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE AND EDUCATIONALLY EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

The State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education met as the 11th Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in Sydney, 30-31 March 2000, chaired by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the Hon Dr David Kemp MP.

Conscious that the achievement of educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples is an urgent national priority, Council agreed to act jointly to assist schools in meeting this challenge.

In reaching agreement to address areas of common concern, the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education committed to the following model of more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools, for use as a framework for action.

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This model is based on a number of findings from recent work to improve the nature of schooling and improve educational outcomes for students.

It is designed for use by schools and systems as a means of creating sustainable change and improvement that integrates the successful outcomes of Indigenous programmes into mainstream schooling practice.

There are three focus areas: community, school and classroom, and each focus area has a number of elements that need to be addressed:

- Community: Partnership arrangements (including teachers and parents), Decision making, Planning, Accountability;
- School: Leadership and coordination, Environment, Organisation, Professional development, Curriculum, Monitoring, assessment and reporting;
- Classroom: Teaching strategies, Learning styles, Classroom organisation, Standards and targets, Intervention/ additional assistance.

The community

The school community needs to have a common understanding regarding the importance of adopting new, and well-documented approaches to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students.

The school community must be proactive on behalf of students and systematically link with the home, the previous school, other service providers and the wider community.

The school community acknowledges the close relationship between low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services and infrastructure by developing cross-portfolio mechanisms to address these issues.

A strong partnership between the school and community will closely support Indigenous parents and care-givers to jointly progress the standards of education and to be actively involved in the decision-making processes and planning for the introduction of new programmes.

Partners who have a common understanding about why decisions have been taken and how decisions are to be implemented are more likely to promote changes proposed and accept the accountability requirements involved, including monitoring and reporting back to the community. This stronger partnership between the school and parents and caregivers of Indigenous students will be reflected in improvements in academic achievement and more regular attendance for Indigenous students.

The school

Leadership and coordination

The integration into the mainstream school programme of new, successful and well documented approaches to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students will rely heavily on the leadership and commitment of the leadership team.

Ideally the school leaders will take direct responsibility for the introduction of new programmes or approaches and/or strongly support a colleague who has been given the responsibility for introducing the initiative. There needs to be a consistent understanding of school priorities and the importance of a new initiative in these priorities.

A fundamental requirement of the leadership team is that it assist everyone affected by the introduction of a new approach to be aware of its impact elsewhere and its potential for improving outcomes within

the school/ community. A collective understanding of the importance of a change, especially in schools with only a small number of Indigenous students, is essential for coordinating the effort to bring that change about within the school and community, and in ensuring that the change is sustainable.

Environment

Settings that support genuine learning and achievement for Indigenous students and in which issues of concern are dealt with quickly and effectively will be flexible and stimulating.

Engagement is regarded as the most influential factor in school improvement. Integral to engagement is relationships: teachers with students, teachers with each other, teachers with parents, the school with the community, students with students and the student with the curriculum.

A safe and supportive school/community environment gives a greater chance of success in sustainable change. Ideally this environment will reflect care, respect and concern for the needs of others in the every day practices of students, educators and administrators.

The effective integration of successful approaches to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students will rely on trust and the involvement of key stakeholders in establishing, implementing and monitoring common and agreed codes of conduct and operating procedures.

Organisation

Schools and communities need to ensure that flexible structures and resourcing prevail that enable Indigenous students to participate in a range of high-quality learning experiences. This will necessarily require schools to look at the allocation of time, staff and resources.

Flexibility can take on a variety of meanings, but is best described as a relentlessness of educators to do whatever it takes to improve student achievement and rapidly accommodate to changed circumstances. Initiatives and approaches need to be seen within an organisational framework that is responsive to needs and circumstances, and creative in use of time, productivity and effectiveness.

Professional development

Opportunities need to be provided to educators and others involved in integrating a new approach for Indigenous students, to attend off-site and on-site professional development as part of a team to ensure leadership in discussion within the school/community.

The team leader needs to be the focal point for implementation and monitoring of the change/s proposed. At the same time the team members need to assume responsibility for each other's growth in the introduction of a new approach.

Standards and targets

A common framework of standards is a pre-condition for improving Indigenous student learning outcomes, with high expectations being made explicit in the setting of specific targets for the school and the students.

The potential for a successful approach to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students to contribute to the achievement of particular targets increases the likelihood that the approach will be sustained or replicated in that setting. The Statement of Principles and Standards for More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the 21st Century makes explicit the standards that Indigenous students should achieve.

Curriculum

A successful approach to the teaching and learning of Indigenous students needs to be integral to the implementation of a dynamic and responsive curriculum that contributes to the development of essential knowledge, skills and attitudes in all students and builds on their capacity to view the world critically and to act independently, cooperatively and responsibly.

The introduction of a new approach needs to respond directly to the needs, interests and concerns of students, with appropriate use of explicit teaching, self-directed learning and emerging technologies. Any new approach needs to be congruent with the prevailing curriculum and standards framework of the system and with student / parent / care-giver / teacher / community expectations.

Monitoring, assessment and reporting

Once a new approach is established, comprehensive and accurate information needs to be provided to Indigenous students and other stakeholders to measure educational progress and to ensure continued learning and development.

Again, performance measurement will be seen within the context of the systemic approach to measuring improvement against a standards framework, especially the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks and goals.

Continuous monitoring and recording of Indigenous student progress and achievement in curriculum and social areas are vital in determining whether the introduction of a new approach is successful, especially where there exist explicit statements about what Indigenous students are expected to know, be able to do and demonstrate as a result of the new approach.

The monitoring and assessment of Indigenous students will provide information on which the future direction of the curriculum can be based. This process will be strengthened where Indigenous students, parents and community members provide input to, participate in and reflect on assessment and reporting processes.

The classroom

Teaching strategies and learning styles

All school/community programmes, ongoing and new, should provide multiple creative opportunities for Indigenous students to learn, achieve and reflect on their own learning in a supportive environment in which truth, honesty and a respect for diversity are promoted. The major challenge is to provide structured teaching and learning programmes while responding to young Indigenous people's developmental needs; and at the same time, recognising that some students may need additional assistance periodically.

Of key importance to the successful integration of new approaches into the mainstream of the school curriculum will be educators who know, understand and can work collaboratively with their Indigenous students; have high expectations and standards; and are flexible, risk-taking facilitators who are receptive to innovation.

It is also important to recognise that sound teaching practice reflects the ability of the educator to match an appropriate teaching practice to the needs and strengths of the Indigenous learner.

Even with the best teaching, some students will need additional support to achieve success. Intervention for Indigenous students at most risk becomes an important consideration and a range of strategies, including one-on-one and small group teaching, individualised learning programmes, mentoring programmes and parent /community support, must be considered.

Classroom organisation

Classroom organisation should recognise differences in learning styles, needs, performance levels, areas of interest and general capacities. The flexibility, productivity and effectiveness sought by the school and the Indigenous community in general should also exist within each classroom.